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1) BRIGGS CONTRACT BOOSTS PAY, BUT HEALTH INSURANCE COSTS ALSO GROW

www.jsonline.com

Oct. 22, 2010 -- Briggs and Stratton Corp. workers will lose ground financially under a newly approved labor contract despite a signing bonus and 2% annual raises for the next three years, the head of the union representing the employees said Friday.

A company spokeswoman, however, called approval of the contract "a win-win for everyone."

Members of United Steelworkers Local 2-232 on Thursday voted 211-77 to accept the three-year pact.

"To the public, it may appear that we're getting a raise, but in reality, we're not," said Jesse Edwards, president of Local 2-232.

Employees' increased health insurance costs under the contract more than offset the boost in pay and the one-time, \$500-a-person signing bonus, he said.

"We feel that it was a bad contract, but it gives the members a chance to work a little longer and maybe come back after the three years and try to improve the contract," Edwards said.

He said the union leadership made no recommendation to members on the pact. It covers about 350 employees at Briggs' plant in Wauwatosa, where the firm also has its headquarters.

Union-represented workers there average about \$16 an hour, Edwards said.

Under the new contract, he said, the amount employees must pay annually in health insurance deductibles before coverage kicks in will rise by \$1,200 for a single person and by \$1,800 for a family.

He said the contract allows the company to bring in temporary workers to supplement production in the generator division at Wauwatosa as it sees fit.

Major Wisconsin manufacturers increasingly are seeking to use lower-paid temporary, or casual, labor, which gives management production flexibility and cost savings.

Laura Timm, director of corporate communications for Briggs, said by e-mail that the company recently added jobs at Wauwatosa with the introduction of home-generator manufacturing. The new contract reflects the seasonal production of the generators, she said.

Virtually all of Briggs' U.S. employees already have seen or will see the same changes in health insurance plans that the contract with the Steelworkers incorporates, Timm said.

Edwards also said Friday that Briggs plans to move production of engine coils out of Wauwatosa in 2012. The work will go to China and the Dominican Republic, he said. About 20 to 25 Wauwatosa employees now do the coil work, Edwards said.

Timm said Briggs has had coils made in the Dominican Republic for "a very long time."

"We continue to evaluate the best possible source for coils both domestically and internationally," she said.

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2) BRIGGS AND STRATTON MERGES GENERATOR AND POWER EQUIPMENT BUSINESS UNITS

Briggs and Stratton Corp.'s recent decision to merge two of its business units has led to job cuts in the company's management ranks.

The Wauwatosa-based manufacturer of small engines and outdoor power equipment is merging its Home Power and Yard Power groups into a single unit, company spokeswoman Laura Timm said.

"We made some staffing changes to streamline the group's functions as part of this strategic move," she said. "This included eliminating a limited number of management positions."

Timm declined to reveal the exact number of jobs that were cut or the names of the executives whose positions were eliminated, citing privacy issues.

Briggs and Stratton's Home Power Group included generators and pressure washers, while the Yard Power Group had been made up of the Simplicity, Snapper and Ferris brands of products and assets that the company bought from Murray Inc.

The consolidated Products Group will be led by Harold Redman Sr., a senior vice president at Briggs and Stratton who had been president of the Home Power Products Group. Vincent Shiely had served as president of the Yard Power Products Group. The company wouldn't comment on whether Shiely was one of the executives who lost their jobs.

"We are confident that this new structure creates a solid business model that will allow our team to better serve our customers and consumers with products, programs and services," Timm said.

News of the reorganization came shortly after Briggs and Stratton reported a fiscal first-quarter loss of \$8.1 million, or 16 cents per share, as consumer spending remained weak.

The performance, which exceeded analysts' expectations, represented a slight improvement from the same period last year, when the company reported a net loss of \$8.7 million.

Sales for the three-month period rose 2.9 percent to \$334.1 million.

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3) GENERAC REPORTS THIRD QUARTER 2010 EARNINGS

WAUKESHA, WISCONSIN, (November 4, 2010) - Generac Holdings Inc. (NYSE:GNRC) , a leading designer and manufacturer of backup power generation products, today reported financial results for its third quarter ended September 30, 2010.

Third Quarter 2010 Highlights

- Net sales increased year-over-year by 11.4% to \$160.7 million as compared to \$144.3 million in the third quarter of 2009.

- Net income increased year-over-year by 60.6% to \$23.0 million as compared to \$14.3 million for the third quarter of 2009; Adjusted net income increased 35.3% to \$36.7 million from \$27.1 million in the third quarter of 2009.

- Net cash provided by operating activities improved 50.0% year-over-year, from \$24.3 million to \$36.5 million during the third quarter 2010.
- Diluted net income per common share was \$0.34 per share; Adjusted diluted net income per common share was \$0.55 per share.
- The Company successfully launched its new economy home standby product, CorePower™ Series, establishing a new lower opening price for the category.

"Despite the difficult operating environment which persisted throughout the third quarter of 2010, we achieved a double digit year-over-year increase in net sales, driven by increased sales for both our residential and industrial products.

Although we have not had the benefit of major outage activity this summer, improved industrial market conditions and our ability to expand distribution and create awareness for our residential products have helped us drive strong revenue growth in our business." said Aaron Jagdfeld, President and Chief Executive Officer of Generac.

Residential product sales of \$101.0 million increased 12.6% in the third quarter 2010 from \$89.7 million in the third quarter last year. This year-over-year increase was driven primarily by our marketing programs for home standby generators, continued expansion of our residential products distribution network, and a shift towards in-season buying.

Industrial and commercial product sales of \$49.6 million in the third quarter increased 7.6% from \$46.0 million for the comparable period in 2009. This increase was driven by an improvement in our focused end markets and expansion of our distribution.

The Company has also announced the following strategic initiatives designed to improve Generac's long-term growth profile:

- In October 2010, the Company announced it had reached a licensing agreement with Honeywell to be the exclusive licensee of Honeywell branded standby and portable generators. By leveraging Generac's product offering and support network, the Honeywell brand will provide incremental access to underpenetrated channels for the Company including security and HVAC.
- At the recent 2011 Green Industry and Equipment (GIE) Expo in Louisville, KY, the Company announced plans to re-enter the market for residential and contractor grade pressure washers, allowing it to leverage its existing customer base, supply-chain and engineering expertise.

Overall, gross profit margin increased sequentially to 41.9% from 39.0% in the second quarter 2010, but was down from 44.7% in the same period last year. The year-over-year decline in gross margins was mostly attributable to increased commodity costs versus prior year and a higher mix of lower kilowatt residential products sold during the current quarter compared to the prior year quarter.

Operating expenses for the third quarter of 2010 increased 10.9% to \$37.6 million compared to \$33.9 million in third quarter of 2009. The year-over-year increase in operating expenses was attributable to increased administrative costs related to operating as a public company, non-cash stock compensation expenses, higher engineering and product development costs, and higher variable operating expenses on higher net sales versus prior year.

Adjusted EBITDA of \$45.7 million was relatively flat compared to \$46.1 million in the third quarter of 2009. Interest expense decreased in the third quarter of 2010 to \$6.5 million, compared to \$17.2 million in the same period last year due to debt repayments, lower LIBOR rates, and the termination of certain interest rate swap agreements. Free cash flow generation remained strong, improving 51.1% year-over-year to \$35.2 million during the third quarter 2010 from \$23.3 million in the third quarter of 2009.

OUTLOOK

Mr. Jagdfeld concluded, "As we close out 2010, we expect to see continued year-over-year strength from our industrial and commercial products as demand in those markets continues to improve. However, more than offsetting this improvement, we see our fourth quarter 2010 residential product sales down year-over-year as certain customers have approached seasonal stocking for lower kilowatt products more conservatively this year versus last year. Despite this, we remain confident in our longer term growth initiatives including new product

launches, continued expansion of our distribution network and our entry into new geographies and markets that will continue to drive sales growth and significant cash flow generation for our business."

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4) LAWNMOWER MANUFACTURER TO EXPAND IN SOUTH CAROLINA

ORANGEBURG – November 4 -- Husqvarna North America, a manufacturer of lawnmowers, chainsaws and other lawn and garden equipment, plans to expand its Orangeburg, SC operations.

The company expects to invest \$105 million in the plant over the next 13 years, according to the South Carolina Department of Commerce.

"The expansion of our Orangeburg plant will help our company remain competitive and make our operations more efficient," said Michael Jones of Husqvarna North America. "South Carolina has proven to be an ideal fit for our operations, providing us with a thriving business environment, a talented workforce and exceptional access to markets. We look forward to expanding our manufacturing operations in South Carolina in the near future."

Husqvarna North America is in the process of adding equipment to its Orangeburg, which currently produces riding garden tractors, tillers and similar products. The added equipment will allow the plant to assemble new products including the company's zero-turn-radius lawnmowers.

Husqvarna will make its investment in two phases. The first phase will involve a \$30 million investment to be completed by Dec. 31, 2013, and the second phase will involve a \$75 million investment to be completed by Dec. 31, 2024.

The company's Orangeburg plant has been in operation since the early 1970s, and Husqvarna is the largest employer in the county.

"Husqvarna has been an integral part of the Orangeburg County economy for nearly four decades," U.S. Rep. James Clyburn (D-S.C.) said. "This expansion is further evidence of its commitment to the community. Orangeburg County officials have worked hard to attract new investments. This announcement is an indication that their efforts are paying off, and I believe other companies will follow Husqvarna's lead in making Orangeburg home."

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5) AS GLOBAL ECONOMY SHIFTS, COMPANIES RETHINK, RETOOL www.online.wsj.com

WASHINGTON—November 7 -- When leaders of the world's largest economies gather for a summit in Seoul this Thursday, their mantra will be "global rebalancing."

The idea is to change the world economy so that it relies less on American consumers and more on shoppers in China, Germany and other countries with big trade surpluses. The aim is to build a firmer foundation for global growth and avoid financial instability.

But it's far easier for politicians to talk about rebalancing than to achieve it. Over the weekend, Germany's finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble lashed out at the U.S., telling a German publication, "There are many reasons for America's problems—German export surpluses aren't one of them."

While government policies—exchange rates, interest rates, taxes, trade barriers—play a role, rebalancing depends critically on decisions made in corporate boardrooms.

CEOs are scanning the globe constantly, trying to discern whether American consumers are truly becoming thriftier, whether Chinese economic strength is sustainable and whether Europe is destined for slow growth. At the most practical level, rebalancing hinges on their success in selling more goods in lower-consuming nations such as China and Germany.

"They are central to rebalancing," says University of Chicago economist Raghuram Rajan, a leading theorist of rebalancing. "They are the agents carrying it out."

A look at three companies—Briggs and Stratton Corp., a 102-year-old U.S. lawn-mower manufacturer; German luxury car maker BMW AG; and Gap Inc., the iconic U.S. apparel retailer—shows why rebalancing is bound to be slower, more complicated and riskier than finance ministers and their economic advisers suggest.

"How do you convince people to change behavior?" asks Friedrich Eichiner, BMW's chief financial officer. "It's very difficult."

The Group-of-20 nations pledged last fall in Pittsburgh to rebalance growth, but so far there is scant evidence of fundamental change. Rather than shift to domestic consumption, China and Germany are reporting big gains in exports through August, though their trade surpluses are roughly comparable to 2009's recession-year trough. The U.S. trade deficit, meanwhile, is up 40% from last year.

For companies, the global math is daunting. The U.S. consumer is such a large portion of the global economy that freer-spending consumers elsewhere won't easily make up any shortfall. Each percentage-point reduction in the annual savings rate in Germany and China—two countries with particularly big surpluses that have pledged to boost spending—would increase consumer spending by a total of just \$42 billion.

By contrast, each percentage-point increase in the U.S. household savings rate reduces spending by \$100 billion, estimates McKinsey Global Institute, the think tank of the consultancy. U.S. consumers now save 6% of their after-tax income, compared to just 1% in 2005.

Each of the three companies finds rebalancing tricky, illustrating the scope of the challenge.

For Briggs and Stratton, shifting business to China is hard because the Chinese buy few of the items it makes for Americans. Germany, meanwhile, is a small market for U.S.-style lawn mowers.

For the Gap, expanding in the competitive German market and in the fast-expanding Chinese market simultaneously requires different strategies and relentless trial and error.

For BMW, the challenge is maintaining balance: Its cars are such a hit in China that the German company's executives fear they are vulnerable to government interference or a bursting of a China bubble.

The Limits of Culture

Briggs and Stratton is looking to China, Germany, India and anywhere the grass grows to make up for lost U.S. lawn-mower sales. "It drives me crazy when I see people [overseas] on their hands and knees cutting grass" without power mowers, says the company's chief executive, Todd Teske.

But the company's products are so tightly woven into the fabric of U.S. suburbia—what's more American than mowing the grass on a Saturday afternoon?—that Briggs and Stratton faces steep cultural hurdles to expand abroad. The emerging Chinese middle class live in apartments, not single family homes, so few need lawn mowers. German homeowners have smaller lawns, on average, than Americans, and don't need the powerful gas-driven mowers that are Briggs and Stratton's specialty.

The lesson: It's hard for many companies to quickly shift sales overseas because foreign consumers have very different tastes and needs.

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When the real-estate market burst, so did Briggs and Stratton's U.S. sales. Earnings fell short of consensus estimates in 12 of 14 quarters between March 2005 and June 2008, according to FactSet Research Systems, a market research firm.

Briggs and Stratton has scaled back its hopes for U.S. growth. It figures the market for its lawn mower and other small engines will be just shy of 8 million engines this year compared to estimates of more than 11 million before the recession.

To cope, the company has slashed expenses, cutting its global work force to 7,000 by eliminating 2,500 U.S. jobs since 2005 and shifting output from unionized Wisconsin to southern college towns, where it could hire students as part-time, nonunion workers.

In theory, big growth could come from the lawns of Europe and the developing world, but American-style mowers aren't the rage overseas. While about one fourth of Briggs and Stratton's \$2 billion in revenue now come from abroad, those sales have barely budged since 2006.

China does beckon—but not for lawn mowers. Briggs and Stratton has set its sights on the agricultural market, banking on Beijing spending heavily to mechanize farms as part of the next step in China's development. The American company has reworked engines that it produces in its Chongqing factory, so they could be used in rice harvesters and planters.

Although Briggs and Stratton has a city-based network of dealers in China to sell generators and mowers, it needs a new set of rural distributors. The task is so daunting, Briggs and Stratton is looking for a Chinese partner that knows the rural market and also has an in with the government. Farmers who buy machinery endorsed by the government can receive subsidies of as much as 90% of equipment costs.

"The Chinese market won't move the needle one iota in the next two years," from current sales of less than \$75 million, says Mr. Teske. "In three to five years, it could be a big business."

Two Markets, Two Strategies

The Gap tried to expand to Germany once before, but it failed and shut its 10 stores there in 2004. Now it's set to re-enter, only this time via the Internet instead of with bricks-and-mortar stores, hoping to save money.

The lesson: rebalancing is risky and expensive because of entrenched competition in many sectors, so many companies move cautiously.

"Where do we find growth?" says Art Peck, the company's executive vice president. "We need to monetize our brands across economies and geographies." That's because in the U.S. sales have dropped by about 15% since the recession and, Mr. Peck says, American consumers remain "twitchy."

To help compensate, the Gap is embarking on a two-speed overseas strategy. It is going slow in Germany and other European countries, where it is improving its website so European shoppers can order in their own language and pay in their own currency. Relying on technology, the Gap figures, limits its financial risk in a slow-growth, high-competition market.

It makes sense to "gauge consumer interest" before investing more heavily in stores in Europe, where it long has had more than 100 outlets in Britain, France and Ireland, says Mr. Peck, a slim 54-year-old executive vice president, who dresses for work in Gap jeans and sports shirts.

Retailers have a notoriously difficult time succeeding overseas because they must learn to deal with different tastes, regulations and market quirks. They have a special role in global rebalancing, inducing consumers overseas to spend more through special deals and glitzy marketing.

Germany, one of the big hopes for rebalancers, is an especially tough market. Not only is it chock full of established competitors, but German consumers also aren't given to splurges.

In Munich, Uta Juergens, a 43-year-old bookstore employee, and her 20-year-old daughter, Sabrina, stopped to chat outside an HandM department store, one of the Gap's big rivals. Mrs. Juergens doesn't own a credit card. Her daughter has one she limits strictly for Internet purchases.

"When I don't have money, I can't spend it," Sabrina says approvingly. Neither show much interest in the Gap when they hear it will only be available online because they like to try on clothes before buying them, they say.

Wary of expanding more in Germany, the Gap is pushing hard in China, where it is opening four new stores in Shanghai and Beijing starting this week.

The Gap realizes it is facing plenty of competition already in China, including its global rivals H&M and Zara. It hopes to differentiate itself by offering an "Asian fit," with fewer curves, and undercut competitors on price on some items. Many Western retailers simply translate their U.S. or European prices into yuan, or mark them up further, turning jeans and blouses into luxury purchases for consumers who earn far less than their Western counterparts.

But even if the Gap and other retailers are a hit, it is unclear it will make much difference in the idea of turning China into a consumption-led economy.

A study by University of British Columbia economist Keith Head and two others of the impact of four Western retailers in China—Walmart of the U.S., Carrefour of France, Metro of Germany and Tesco of the U.K.—suggests that the stores actually increased Chinese exports. The retailers are such demanding buyers that their Chinese suppliers become more productive and better able to compete internationally.

Too Much of a Good Thing

For BMW, rebalancing is occurring more rapidly than it expected. But the car maker's top executives aren't celebrating: They worry about becoming too dependent on China.

The lesson: Fearing arbitrary government actions, companies are wary of relying too much on China.

Since the beginning of the year, BMW sales in China have nearly doubled to 114,000 vehicles, making it BMW's third-largest market. Meanwhile sales in the two larger markets, U.S. and Germany, have increased just 5% to a total of about 330,000 cars after falling sharply from pre-recession levels. That is precisely the kind of pattern that rebalancers have been hoping for.

China is now BMW's largest market for its largest and most profitable sedans. Bernstein Research estimates that 50% of BMW's operating profits come from China; BMW says that the profit number is a "lower two digit number." "It's kind of a windfall," says Mr. Eichiner, BMW's 55-year-old CFO, in his Munich office. "But our strategy isn't to rely on that development. If you do, you lose your focus in the U.S. and Europe."

Overall, consumer spending makes up just 40% of China's gross domestic product, compared to 70% in the U.S. and 56% in Germany, and Chinese households save more than 25% of their disposable income.

The country's affluent class, though, spends freely, making luxury-goods makers big winners. Chinese who earn more than \$100,000 are four times more likely than Americans with the same income to buy luxury cars, according to Bernstein Research.

Wealthy Chinese also hunt for high-end fashion, bags, shoes, perfume and other department store items. Chinese purchases of those items will grow 30% this year, to about \$13 billion, according to the consulting firm Bain and Co., which says China will become the world's third-largest market for luxury goods, behind the U.S. and Japan, in the middle of the decade.

BMW's senior management says 100% growth is unsustainable, but how much should BMW plan on—20%? 30%? If it overestimates, the company fears getting hammered in a bust.

Even more daunting is the political risk of doing business in an autocratic government whose policies can change suddenly. Mr. Eichiner says he is especially concerned Beijing may want to give domestic small-car producers a boost by crippling imports of BMWs and other larger vehicles through fuel-efficiency regulations or taxes.

So, BMW is downshifting. While it makes one big sedan especially for the Chinese market, it isn't ramping up production enough to fill all its Chinese orders. It wants to make sure it has sufficient supply for the U.S. and Germany.

The company is also counting on the U.S. to rebound more quickly than doom-and-gloomers think, making rebalancing less necessary than the leaders gathered in Seoul believe. It is even reconsidering its decision to cancel a new large SUV, which was meant mainly for U.S. buyers.

"I don't think the U.S. savings rate is sustainable at a level of 6% or 7%," says Mr. Eichiner. Once Americans feel confident again, they'll spend, he says. "It's how Americans are coined."

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6) OIL INDUSTRY JOINS OTHERS ATTEMPTING TO BLOCK E15

www.desmoinesregister.com

Washington, D.C. – November 10 -- The oil industry is joining with food manufacturers, livestock producers and fast-food restaurants in an effort to block an increase in the amount of ethanol that can be added to gasoline.

They say the Environmental Protection Agency doesn't have the authority to permit higher ethanol blends in some vehicles but not in others. The EPA last month agreed to allow cars and trucks that are 2007 and newer to run on gasoline with 15 percent ethanol, a blend known as E15.

The ethanol limit has long been 10 percent for all vehicles with the exception of "flexible fuel" cars and trucks that are manufactured to run on ethanol or gasoline.

"This legal action will give EPA a second chance to get this important decision right," said Scott Faber, vice president for federal affairs at the Grocery Manufacturers Association.

His group was joined by the American Petroleum Institute and a series of livestock and food industry groups, including the National Pork Producers, National Council of Chain Restaurants and the American Meat Institute, in asking a federal appeals court to block the EPA's E15 decision.

Gasoline refiners also may challenge the decision, as well as engine manufacturers and other sectors that have expressed concerns that misuse of E15 would damage motors.

A proposed warning label on E15 gasoline pumps isn't enough to prevent consumers from putting the fuel in cars and equipment for which it is not approved, said Kris Kiser, a spokesman for the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute, whose members make lawn mowers, leaf blowers, garden tractors and other products.

Livestock producers and food groups have long argued that ethanol usage is driving up the cost of producing meat, milk and other products by keeping prices for commodities higher than they otherwise would be.

Their concerns were underscored by Agriculture Department reports Tuesday that sent corn and soybean prices higher on projections of tight crop supplies, growing ethanol production and increased export demand.

"This challenge to the EPA's decision is necessary to reduce the strain that ethanol production from corn has placed on U.S. agriculture," said Scott Vinson, vice president of the National Council of Chain Restaurants.

Some in the ethanol industry are unhappy with the EPA, too, both because it limited E15 to the newest vehicles and because of the orange warning label that the EPA has proposed for service-station pumps. The agency is waiting on research to be completed before expanding approval to include vehicles made since 2001.

Tom Buis, CEO of the ethanol trade group Growth Energy, said opponents of his industry were trying legal means to slow the growth of biofuel production because they have been "unable to dispute the overwhelming science in favor of E15."

The EPA said its E15 decision was "based on strict adherence to the Clean Air Act and grounded firmly in science. The agency relied on numerous rounds of rigorous testing on 19 car models and, at every step, worked in close consultation with automakers and fuel suppliers."

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7) HONDA AND MANTIS MINI TILLERS WITH HONDA ENGINES RECALLED DUE TO FIRE HAZARD

WASHINGTON, D.C. – November 16 -- The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, in cooperation with the firm named below, today announced a voluntary recall of the following consumer product. Consumers should stop using recalled products immediately unless otherwise instructed. It is illegal to resell or attempt to resell a recalled consumer product.

Name of Product: Honda and Mantis Mini Tillers

Units: About 6,150

Manufacturer: American Honda Motor Co., of Torrance, Calif.

Hazard: A rubber grommet that is part of the engine's fuel tank may crack and leak fuel, posing a fire hazard.

Incidents/Injuries: None reported.

Description: The recalled mini tillers have Honda GX25 mini four-stroke engines and their engine serial numbers can be found on the engine near the fuel tank cap. Both brands come in red and black.

Honda Mini Tiller: Model number FG110 with serial numbers GCALT 1696948 to 1700567.

Mantis Mini Tiller: Model numbers 7262 and 7270 with serial numbers GCART-1165215 to 1171495.

Sold at: Honda Power Equipment Dealers, The Home Depot, outdoor power equipment dealers, rental dealers, retailers, mail order and catalog houses nationwide from March 2010 through September 2010 for about \$400.

Manufactured: The engines were made in Thailand and assembled in the United States using domestic and globally sourced products.

Remedy: Consumers should immediately stop using any mini tiller with engines in the affected serial number ranges and contact any Honda Power Equipment dealer or Honda Engine dealer (Mantis owners only) to arrange to have the fuel tank assembly replaced free of charge. Registered owners of the recalled mini tillers will be sent a notice by mail.

Consumer Contact: For additional information:

Honda FG110 mini-tiller owners should contact Honda at (888) 888-3139 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. ET Monday through Friday, or visit the firm's website at www.hondapowerequipment.com

Mantis mini-tiller owners should either contact Mantis Customer Service at (800) 366-6268, visit www.mantis.com or contact Honda at (888) 888-3139 between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. ET Monday through Friday, or visit www.hondapowerequipment.com

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8) 2011 OPE INDUSTRY EVENTS AND MEETINGS CALENDAR

2011 OPE INDUSTRY MEETING AND EVENTS CALENDAR	
January 18-20, 2011	BTME-BIGGA , British Turf Management and the British International Golf & Greenkeepers Association Show, Harrogate International Center, England
January 18 – 21, 2011	World of Concrete , Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV
February 28 – March 3, 2011	The Rental Show , American Rental Association Conference and Trade Show, Mandalay Bay Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV
February 9 – 10, 2011	GIS , Golf Industry Show, Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, FL
February 12 – 15, 2011	OPEAA , Outdoor Power Equipment Aftermarket Association Annual Meeting, Renaissance Vinoy Resort and Golf Club, St. Petersburg, FL
February 27 – March 2, 2011	OPEESA , Outdoor Power Equipment and Engine Service Association, 10 th Annual Members Meeting, Four Seasons Resort, Palm Beach, FL
March 13, 2011	Daylight Savings Time Begins
April 7 - 9, 2011	EETC , Equipment and Engine Training Council 15 th Annual Conference, Radisson Hotel Milwaukee West, Milwaukee, WI
May 10-12, 2011	National Hardware Show , Las Vegas Convention Center and Sands Convention Center
June 19-25, 2011	Skills USA , National Leadership and Skills Conference, Kansas City, Missouri
	OPEI , Outdoor Power Equipment Institute Annual Meeting
September 4-6, 2011	GAFA (with SPOGA) , International Garden Trade Fair with the International Trade Fair for Sport, Camping and Garden Lifestyle, Cologne, Germany
September 6-8, 2010	IUG SALTEX , Grounds Care, Sports Facilities, Amenities, Landscaping And Estate Management Outdoor Trade Show, Windsor Race Track, Windsor, Berkshire, England
September 19-21, 2011	GLEE , International Garden and Leisure Show, NEC Birmingham, England
October 19-22, 2011	FFA , Future Farmers of America Annual Convention, Indianapolis, IN
October 27-29, 2011	GIE+EXPO , Green Industry and Equipment Expo, Louisville, KY (combining EXPO and the GIE Show)
November 6, 2011	Daylight Savings Time Ends

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9) GIE+EXPO PARTNERSHIP EXTENDED THROUGH 2014

www.appliancemagazine.com

Nov 17, 2010 -- The sponsoring associations of GIE+EXPO have agreed to extend their partnership contract through 2014. GIE+EXPO is sponsored by the Outdoor Power Equipment Institute (OPEI), the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET), and the Professional Grounds Management Society (PGMS).

The GIE+EXPO began as a combination of two events – the Green Industry Conference and Expo (GIC/GIE) and the International Lawn, Garden & Power Equipment Expo. Hardscape North America co-located at GIE+EXPO 2010 and has signed on to co-locate again in 2011.

"With an ever-growing and changing industry, the combined show just makes sense," said OPEI president and CEO Bill Harley. "Attendees are exposed to different aspects of the industry that can help grow their businesses and increase profits while exhibitors are put in front of a larger audience."

The 2011 GIE+EXPO is scheduled for October 27-29 at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville.

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10) ARIENS CO. TO ACQUIRE SOVDE OF RYGGE, NORWAY

BRILLION, WI – November 18 -- Ariens Co. said Wednesday it reached an agreement to acquire Norwegian power equipment distributor Sovde of Rygge, Norway.

Terms of the deal were not announced.

Sovde will continue to operate as a distributor between Ariens and independent power equipment dealers in Norway, the company said.

"While it is not part of our long-term strategy to acquire distributorships, the decision was based on a 40-year relationship with the Sovde family who grew the Ariens Sno-Thro brand to become the largest-selling snow thrower brand in Norway," said Dan Ariens, president and CEO.

Ariens also recently acquired British tractor company Countax.

Ariens Co., headquartered in Brillion, is a manufacturer of outdoor power equipment for consumer and professional use.

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11) CPSC, CUB CADET RECALL UTILITY VEHICLES DUE TO RISK OF LOSS OF CONTROL

November 23, 2010

The following product safety recall was voluntarily conducted by the firm in cooperation with the CPSC. Consumers should stop using the product immediately unless otherwise instructed. It is illegal to resell or attempt to resell a recalled consumer product.

Name of Product: Cub Cadet Volunteer utility vehicles

Units: About 200

Manufacturer: MTD Consumer Group Inc., of Cleveland, Ohio

Hazard: The front lower ball joint can detach and cause a loss of steering control. This poses a crash hazard for consumers.

Incidents/Injuries: None reported.

Description: This recall involves four-wheel drive Cub Cadet Volunteer gasoline-powered utility vehicle. Model numbers included in the recall are 37BB475H710, 37BC465D710, 37BC466D710, 37BK466D710, 37BK46GD710, 37BM466D710, 37BM467D710 and 37BM46GD710. The serial number range is 1C290Z50001 through 1D280Z50007. Serial numbers included in the recall have a "C" or "D" in the second position and a "0" as the fifth digit. Model and serial numbers are printed on a plate located under the driver's seat. "Cub Cadet" is printed on the hood.

Sold at: Cub Cadet dealers nationwide from April 2010 through September 2010 for between \$6,800 and \$9,800.

Manufactured in: United States

Remedy: Consumers should immediately stop using the recalled vehicles and contact their local Cub Cadet dealer to schedule a free repair. Cub Cadet is contacting all known consumers.

Consumer Contact: For more information, contact Cub Cadet toll-free at (888) 848-6038 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. ET Monday through Friday or visit the firm's website at www.cubcadet.com

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12) BRIGGS AND STRATTON UNION WORKERS START ANTI-DUES PETITION

Rick Barrett www.jsonline.com

November 23 -- In what has become an increasingly difficult environment for organized labor, some union workers at Briggs and Stratton Corp. are circulating petitions asking for the right to avoid paying union dues.

The petition to remove the union security clause from the contract would not do away with the union, United Steelworkers Local 2-232, but would do away with the requirement that all union-covered workers pay dues.

The unusual action was triggered by a pending dues increase that would link the size of the monthly dues payment to an employee's wages - in some cases more than doubling the dues of the highest-paid workers.

The move comes as unions at Briggs and several other marquee Wisconsin companies - including Mercury Marine Inc., Kohler Co. and Harley-Davidson Inc. - have had to accept contract concessions such as two-tier wage systems that pay new workers less, increased use of temporary workers, layoffs, wage freezes or increased health care costs.

"Union members generally like their unions," said John Heywood, a business professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee who teaches classes in human resources and labor relations.

"But they have had to give up a lot. It's not a good environment."

The Briggs petitioners contend that giving employees the option of not paying dues would hold union leaders more accountable, forcing them to work harder for their members.

"All we are looking for is freedom of choice," said Briggs employee Don Metzefeld.

The Steelworkers represent about 350 employees at the Briggs plants in Milwaukee and Menomonee Falls.

The petitioners have asked the National Labor Relations Board for an election that would decide whether employees have the right to not pay union dues and, under law, still get the benefits of the union contract. They need 107 signatures to get an election, and organizers said they have about 70.

Such petitions are rare, according to the National Labor Relations Board, which said there have been only four of them in Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in the past four years.

Of those four, three resulted in elections, but none resulted in an elimination of the union security clause.

"Our office has been open since June 1964. Over that time, we have had 180 of these petitions. It's not very many," said Erving Gottschalk, National Labor Relations Board regional director.

Triggering the petition drive among the Briggs workers was the upcoming change in the dues structure.

Union members pay dues of about \$44 a month, regardless of their annual income.

Under the new system, effective in January, a worker with gross pay of \$5,000 a month, working 190 hours, would pay about \$76 a month in dues, according to Steelworkers officials.

In contrast, someone earning \$2,000 a month, or \$24,000 a year, would see a decrease in dues.

"It's based on your ability to pay. We believe the formula is fair to all of our members," said Michael Bolton, Steelworkers District 2 director.

For five years, the new system has been scheduled to be implemented in 2011, Bolton said, adding that the Steelworkers' leadership opposes the petitioners' efforts. "It's for the betterment of all to have a union shop," he said.

Briggs employees recently approved a labor contract that gave them a signing bonus and 2% annual raises for the next three years, but it also increases health care costs and allows the company to bring in temporary workers to supplement production in the generator division at Wauwatosa.

Briggs officials said they were not involved in the union petitions and declined to comment.

At some companies, many people get the benefits of union representation without having to pay for it, Heywood said.

"Ultimately, a union will not be able to do its job if enough people don't pay," he said. A vote to eliminate a union security clause "can be the first move to undermine and replace the union, if enough people go along for a free ride."

But getting rid of the security clause doesn't mean everyone will abandon a union, said Cheryl Maranto, a Marquette University associate professor of management in the College of Business Administration.

"If there's a small, disgruntled group of people who don't want to be part of the union, it would not be a big deal. But if a large number of people choose not to join the union, and not pay the dues, it would definitely have some impact," Maranto said.

The petitioners said their effort differs from a "decertification" election, which tries to remove a union as the collective bargaining representative.

"Even after a successful de-authorization, every employee remains fully covered by the contract, whether or not he or she remains a union member or pays any dues," a Briggs employee noted in an e-mail. "Union officials have to sell the benefits of union membership."

In the long run, the change could weaken a union's collective bargaining power, said Kimberly Freeman Brown, executive director of American Rights at Work, a pro-union organization.

"It's a drain on resources," she said. "The next time the union negotiates a contract, it won't be in as strong of a position. Long term, it could cost the workforce a lot more than their union dues on a range of issues, including wages and benefits and having a voice in the workplace."

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13) EDUCATING TODAY'S WORKFORCE – An Interesting Article That Includes Stihl Inc.
www.automationworld.com

December 10 -- Innovative training programs and techniques are preparing the future manufacturing workforce. Just about everyone complains about the sad state of affairs these days in education and training—that is, everyone except people like J.R. Gambill, in Virginia Beach, Va. This technical training specialist at **Stihl Inc.** can't complain, because his employer has already done something about the problem. The manufacturer of chain saws and other outdoor power equipment organized a small training team and its subject-matter experts to deliver a mix of courses that it offers to both its employees and surrounding businesses.

"We didn't have an option," explains Gambill. It had become much too difficult to find the training necessary for keeping pace with the relentless advances in technology. Like other companies that rely on technology to keep their competitive edges sharp in the global marketplace, Stihl needs its employees to continually acquire and master highly specialized skills. It, therefore, joined the ranks of manufacturers that are turning in increasing numbers to innovative blended training programs.

"When I started in 2005, most of our in-house training consisted of basic safety compliance programs," recalls Gambill. "We sent most technical people off-site for their training." Now, most receive their training as a blend of in-house and over-the-Internet courses. In addition to administering a four-year apprenticeship program for the machinists and maintenance technicians in crankshaft, piston and guide-bar manufacturing, Stihl offers 39 in-house courses on automation, machining and plastics molding technologies, as well as on business and leadership. The courses on technology occur in a training laboratory that the company outfitted with programmable logic controllers (PLCs), robots, electropneumatics and other equipment for hands-on instruction.

The blended training program relies on a mixture of in-house and outside experts. Three of Stihl's robotic engineers, for example, teach the robotics courses designed for workers in production. Besides giving them the relevant theory, the instructors work with the students on training robots from Fanuc Robotics America Corp., headquartered in Rochester Hills, Mich. To keep the engineers up to date, Gambill also brings in experts periodically from Fanuc and other suppliers.

When a machining supervisor told him in 2007 that he could not afford to pull people off the line, Gambill went looking for an online component that would supplement the offering. The search turned up Tooling University LLC, a Cleveland-based developer of more than 400 Web-based training courses in metalworking and other manufacturing technology.

The online program permits employees to log into courses from their home computers and pursue a course of study on their own time. It also provides an efficient way of delivering theory and preparing workers for the hands-on courses in the company's training lab. "Tooling U had exactly what we were looking for," says Gambill.

Because of the success of a pilot program involving a few machinists, Stihl obtained a full site license and now has 252 students enrolled company-wide in the program. "With just volunteers, our employees have taken more than 1,700 courses in this year alone," reports Gambill.

Metrics for management

Another strength of the program is that it provides administrators with metrics for measuring the effectiveness of the instruction and justifying the expense to management. These metrics are generated from a series of before and after tests. In Stihl's case, students have been averaging about 74 percent on the initial tests and more than 90 percent on their final tests.

These numbers, of course, include more than the courses taken by machinists. They also include assembly-line workers, for example, who want to learn quality assurance. In fact, one of these workers was diligent about taking all of the quality-assurance courses over the last year. When an opening in quality assurance occurred, his investment of time and effort paid a dividend. He got the job.

Manufacturing companies such as Stihl are not the only organizations recognizing the power of blended training programs. Suppliers and professional organizations are offering them, too. In fact, the Society of Manufacturing Engineers (SME), in Dearborn, Mich., announced in September that it would buy all of the outstanding shares of Tooling U. The organization has added the online company's more than 400 online courses to its current blend of certification products, in-person training and Webinars.

"Just as iPods have transformed the world of music, multimedia technology is creating an expectation that training be oriented to the needs of the business and of the individual consuming the knowledge," observes Jeannine Kunz, SME's director of professional development. "The big change in training is that companies are looking for flexible methods for consuming content."

SME, therefore, has invested in the technology for delivering it. In the past, operators of computer numerical control (CNC) machine tools, for example, would browse through Tooling U's library of courses and select the ones of interest. "We've grown this product by creating what we call competency models and assessments for specific jobs," says Kunz. "Based upon the way someone performs on the exam for a CNC operator, a customized learning plan is automatically generated for that person."

Although SME's assessments are normally done according to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) standards that SME also uses for its certification program, SME can customize the program further. Its consultants can perform task analyses for specific positions in a particular company and generate competency models for those jobs. They can then apply whatever standards the company wants to use for making the assessments.

"Some want standards that are nationally normed," notes Kunz, "but others want their own. In either case, we can give them how various plants in the company performed and how they compared to each other and the industry average."

Based on the results, Tooling U's learning management system can recommend courses in the company's in-person training program and supplement with SME's multimedia courses. "An employee's plan may say you need to take the following online courses to get the fundamentals before sitting for this one-week in-person training," says Kunz. Preparing people beforehand ensures that everyone begins at the same level, thereby not wasting the time of those who already know the fundamentals.

Classrooms, here to stay

The interest in blended learning has spurred more than professional associations such as SME to ally themselves with developers of Web-based training programs. Automation suppliers are making their own alliances to enhance their customer service without substantial increases in price. From its headquarters in Sugar Land, Texas, for example, Yokogawa Corp. of America announced in October a partnership with Praxis Technical Group Inc., an e-learning developer that has been generating technical courses from its offices in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada, for 25 years.

The first of these modular, self-paced courses covers Yokogawa's Centum VP control system. "Whether attendees are operators, engineers, technicians, or managers who need training on a Yokogawa product, e-learning is now available on their schedules as private tutoring sessions without any travel," says a Yokogawa spokesperson. Attendees anywhere in the world can access the demonstrations, do the interactive exercises, and participate in question-and-answer sessions.

As good as Web-based training is at delivering targeted information without travel, Yokogawa does not foresee this kind of training as replacing classroom training. One reason is that Web-based training lacks face-to-face interaction with the professor and other students. "You don't have the questions generated by other students to get you thinking and to get you to ask questions," says Platt Beltz, manager of Yokogawa's training department. Even with e-mail and streaming technology, a barrier still exists between the student and the professor, not to mention the rest of the class.

Another reason that he doubts that classroom training will ever go away is the need for hands-on practice under the guidance of an expert. "The reality is that the only way to get some real-world exposure is in a lab or on some sort of training simulator," explains Beltz. "A small simulator can ensure that an operator knows how to run some basic loops before working with an experienced operator on a real system in a mentoring program."

Although some companies invested millions in simulators in the past, the low-fidelity simulators that are on most controllers today can make this unnecessary. "Our controllers can run your process in what we call test function," says Beltz. The code runs on the hard drive to simulate that part of the process that the controller oversees. "It gets them a lot closer to the real world."

For this reason, face-to-face training continues to be the centerpiece of the blended training programs offered by many automation suppliers. ABB Inc., of Wickliffe, Ohio, for example, is building its program around what it calls ABB University, a training school consisting of 15 "campuses" in the United States and one in Mexico. Instructors at these training centers teach courses on engineering, programming and maintenance, as well as offer on-site training at ABB customers' plants. But like others, the university is adding a Web-based training program to reduce both the cost to customers and the time to train their workers.

Your personal trainer

Milwaukee-based supplier Rockwell Automation Inc. also does on-site training, but can package it with consulting services. "Because everybody has more challenges and less time available, we are being asked more to convey content in smaller, more targeted bites," notes Nick Goebel, global business manager for customer training at Rockwell Automation. Acting as a consultant, therefore, "we identify the gaps beforehand and teach only what you

really need."

PepsiCo found this service to be quite effective at its new Gatorade Blue Ridge plant in Wytheville, Va. Packed with cutting-edge automation, this plant needed a highly skilled maintenance staff to keep its costs under control. In the end, the technicians had to be able not only to troubleshoot problems as they arose but also to suggest ways to improve the plant's efficiency over time.

Once Rockwell Automation was called in, its training consultants performed an Integrated Performance Assessment (IPA) to identify the skill levels and gaps. Based on their findings, they recommended that all maintenance technicians complete introductory and intermediate level training in the technologies that they were servicing. Afterward, plant management was to offer further training to a select group of technicians in integration, troubleshooting and programming.

Another recommendation was to embed one of Rockwell Automation's instructors at the plant for 65 days. "The daily interaction and weekly meetings to discuss performance changes, needs and concerns helped to accelerate the learning process and gave technicians an important confidence boost in their skills and abilities," says Warren Chandler, maintenance and reliability manager.

Not only did the instructor provide custom training to the maintenance technicians, but he also developed a course tailored to the facility and built a controls lab that contains workstations for training exercises. Technicians can come to the lab to practice their troubleshooting, maintenance and programming skills as part of a self-guided curriculum.

Because of the training provided by the instructor and the practice available in the lab, unplanned downtime has fallen, and the plant relies less on outside support services.

"Before we started the program, our controls engineer was getting three to five calls per week during third shift, requiring several hours of his time," notes Chandler. Now, those calls come only once every few weeks. So, he knows firsthand how educating the workforce today prepares it for tomorrow and its challenges.

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14) THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY

REASONS OF THE HEART

"The heart has its reasons that reason knows nothing of."

- Pascal

TENDERNESS

The heart is the toughest part of the body.
Tenderness is in the hands.

- Carolyn Forché

THE FUTURE

The best way to predict the future is to invent it.
- Alan Kay

KEY TO SUCCESS

Make everyone you meet feel like they have a sign around their neck
that says "Make Me Feel Important".
This will help you succeed not only in sales, but also in life.

- Mary Kay Ash

COST OF MEDICINE

My doctor never mentioned to me that one of the side effects of the medicine he prescribed,
Was poverty.

- Anonymous

ADVANTAGE

Next to knowing when to seize an opportunity,
The most important thing in life
Is to know when to forgo an advantage.

- Benjamin Disraeli

YOUR FUTURE

If you want to know your future, do something.

- Angel VanBennekom

HONOR

An honor is not diminished for being shared.

- Lois McMaster Bujold

LIFE

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.
Security does not exist in nature,
nor do the children of men as a whole experience it.
Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than exposure.

- Hellen Keller

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15) OPEESA OFFICERS, BOARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

Name	Co.	Address	City State	Email	Position/Term
Mark Vining	Roberts Supply	4203 Metric Drive	Winter Park FL	m.vining@robertssupply.com	President
Robert Graham	Engine Warehouse	7415 Empire Central PO Box 40490	Houston TX Houston TX	Robert.graham@engwarehouse.com	Vice President <i>Annual Meeting</i>
Pete Yunker	Power Equipment Systems	1645 Salem Industrial Dr. PO Box 669	Salem OR Salem OR	petey@pesnet.com	Sec/Treas.
Rob Zucker	Outdoor Equipment Distributors	2721 Discovery Drive PO Box 58494	Raleigh NC Raleigh NC	rzucker@oedinc.com	Immediate Past President
Todd Winstead	Tidewater Power Equipment	5796 Thurston Ave.	Virginia Beach VA	twinstead@tpeco.com	2011
Virginia O'Neill	O'Neill Associates	795 Canning Parkway	Victor NY	virginia@oneilloutdoor.com	2011
Denis Bedard	Husqvarna Professional Products	7349 Statesville Road	Charlotte NC	Denis.bedard@husqvarna.com	2011 <i>Manufacturer/Affiliate Rep.</i>
Robert Smith	Smith's South-Central Sales Co.	1802 S. Arkansas St. PO Box 578	Springhill LA	rsmith@smithssc.com	2011
Tim Congdon	Congdon Associates Dist. Co. – CADCO	1365 Strykers Road PO Box 350	Phillipsburg NJ	timc@cadcodist.com	2012
Mike Lupo	TD Retail Card Services	1000 MacArthur Boulevard	Mahwah, NJ	Mike.lupo@tdrcs.com	2012 <i>Manufacturer/Affiliate Rep.</i>
Ron Monroe	Hayward Distributing Co.	4061 Perimeter Drive	Columbus OH	rmonroe@haydist.com	2013
Mike Rounsavall	Dixie Sales Co.	5920 Summit Ave.	Browns Summit NC	mrounsavall@dixiesales.com	2013
Nancy Cueroni	OPEESA	37 Pratt Street	Essex	Info@opeesa.com	Executive Director

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